highest priorities, and I intend to oppose proposals that would delay funding for the NIH or fail to provide sufficient funding to ensure continued advancement in the field of biomedical research.

The proposed delay in NIH's authority to use $7.5 billion of its FY 2000 funding will mean that no new grants could be made until the end of the fiscal year. Thus, a one-year freeze will be put on all new biomedical research. Moreover, some on-going grants will have to be short-funded. For those suffering from life-threatening diseases, a one-year delay could be devastating. We cannot imperil continued progress in an area as important as biomedical research.

As our Nation searches for ways to improve health care for all its citizens, the need to ensure stability and vitality in biomedical research programs is increasingly imperative. Biomedical research has fundamentally changed our approach to treating disease and illness and has revolutionized the practice of medicine. Through the NIH, the Federal government has been the single largest contributor to the recent advances made in biomedical research, and NIH research has played a major role in the key medical breakthroughs of our time.

Biomedical research at the NIH has also contributed significantly to the growth of this Nation's biotechnology, medical device, and pharmaceutical industries. Many of the new drugs and medical devices currently in use were developed based on biomedical research supported by the NIH. NIH research has paved the way for the development of pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device industries that have created millions of high wage jobs.

The promise of continued breakthroughs in the eradication of disease and the overall improvement in public health are contingent upon our commitment to supporting our scientists and researchers with adequate tools and resources. However, today, only one of three approved research proposals can be funded.

We must maintain our commitment to achieving full funding for biomedical research by FY 2002. Last year, we provided NIH with a downpayment on the resources it will need to take full advantage of the overwhelming opportunities for scientific advancement currently available in the field of biomedical research. This year, again we started on the right track by including another fifteen percent increase in the NIH budget. However, the proposed one percent overall budget cut will have a dramatic impact on the grant-making capacity of the NIH. As a result of this cut, 500 to 550 fewer grants will be awarded by the NIH next year.

This most recent proposal to require that the NIH delay spending approximately $2 billion of its FY 2000 funding until FY 2001, essentially revokes the entire increase for next year and goes back on our promise to substantially increase NIH funding by 2002. This additional funding cut will disrupt and delay research fundamental to saving lives and improving public health. It will also critically undermine our progress toward securing a strong and stable funding stream needed to ensure continued advances in biomedical research.

The proposed delay in NIH funding for FY 2000 is unconscionable. I will oppose it, and I urge the President to veto any conference report that includes this proposal.

AGJOBS ACT OF 1999

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I'm pleased to have joined Senators GORDON SMITH, BOB GRAHAM, MAX CLELAND, and several other colleagues this week in introducing S. 1814. This bill is a new, improved version of the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act—or, as we call it, the ''AgJOBS'' bill.

We are facing a growing crisis—for both farm workers and growers.

We want and need a stable, predictable, legal work force in American agriculture.

Willing American workers deserve a system that puts them first in line for available jobs with fair, market wages. We want all workers to receive decent treatment and equal protection under the law.

Consumers deserve a safe, stable, domestic food supply.

American citizens and taxpayers deserve secure borders and a government that works.

Yet Americans are being threatened on all these counts, because of a growing labor shortage in agriculture, while the only program currently in place to respond, the H–2A Guest Worker Program, is profoundly broken.

Last year, the Senate adopted meaningful H–2A reform, on a bipartisan vote of 68–31. Unfortunately, that bipartisan floor amendment did not survive the last round of negotiations over the omnibus appropriations bill last year.

This year, the problem is only growing worse. Therefore, we are introducing a new, improved bill. The name of the bill says it all—''AgJOBS''.

Mr. President, our farm workers need this reform bill.

There is no debate about whether many—or most—farm wokers are aliens.

They are. And they will be, for the foreseeable future. The question is whether they will be here legally or illegally.

Immigrants not legally authorized to work in this country know they must work in hiding.

They cannot even claim basic legal rights and protections. They are vulnerable to predation and exploitation. They sometimes have been stuffed inhumanly into dangerously enclosed truck trailers and car trunks, in order to be transported, hidden from the view of the law.

In fact, they have been known to pay ''coyotes''—labor smugglers—$1,000 and more to be smuggled into this country.

In contrast, legal workers have legal protections.

They can assert wage, safety, and other legal protections. They can bargain openly and join unions. H–2A workers, in fact, are even guaranteed housing and transportation.

Clearly, the status quo is broken.

Domestic American workers simply are not being found to fill agricultural jobs.

Our own General Accounting Office has estimated that 600,000 farm workers—37 percent of the total 1.6 million agricultural work force—are not legally authorized to work in this country.

That estimate is low; it's based on self-disclosure by illegal workers to government interviewers.

Some actually have suggested that there is no labor shortage, because there are plenty of illegal workers. This is not an acceptable answer.

Congress has shown its commitment over the past few years to improve the security of our borders, both in the 1996 immigration law and in subsequent appropriations.

Between computerized checking by the Social Security Administration and audits and raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, more and more employers are discovering they have undocumented employees; and more and more workers here illegally are being discovered and evicted from their jobs.

Outside of H–2A, employers have no reliable assurance that their employees are legal.

It's worse than a Catch-22—the law actually punishes the employer who could be called ''too diligent'' in inquiring into the identification documents of prospective workers.

The H–2A status quo is slow, bureaucratic, and inflexible. It does nothing to recognize the uncertainties farmers face, from changes in the weather to global market demands.

The H–2A status quo is complicated and legalistic. DOL's compliance manual alone is 325 pages.

The current H–2A process is so hard to use, it will place only 34,000 legal guest workers this year—2 percent of the total agricultural work force.

Finally, the grower can't even count on his or her government to do its job.

The GAO has found that, in more than 40 percent of the cases in which employers filed H–2A applications at least 60 days before the date of need, the DOL missed statutory deadlines in processing them.

The solution we need is the AgJOBS Act of 1999.

Our new, improved AgJOBS bill includes three main parts:

First, it would create a national AgJOBS registry.

This new program would match willing workers anywhere in the U.S. with available farm work. Workers would be

free to work where they want and for whom they want.

Domestic American workers would be given first preference in job referrals. Once no domestic worker is available for a job, an ''adjusting'' worker could receive a referral. If no domestic or adjusting worker is available, an employer could then use the H–2A program.

This is essentially the same job registry as in last year's bill, expanded to accommodate the new category of adjusting workers.

Second, it includes much-needed reforms to the H–2A program.

Currently, red tape, regulation, and bureaucracy has rendered the H–2A program almost completely ineffective.

Our reformed H–2A program would expedite the process and more closely reflect market reality. Current red tape, delays, and paperwork would be reduced or eliminated. Growers would be assured of the timely availability of workers.

Employers still would be required to provide transportation in out of the U.S., as under the current H–2A program. Employers must provide either a housing allowance or actual housing to H–2A workers. After 3 years, actual housing would be required, unless the governor of a state certified a housing shortage. This is a more stringent housing requirement than last year's bill.

The premium wage guaranteed to H–2A workers—called the Adverse Economic Wage Rate or ''AEWR''—would be based more accurately on prevailing wage paid to similar workers in that area. This is similar to current law, but other jobs, those not closely related, would be excluded from the calculation of the AEWR. This simply would ensure that the AEWR more closely reflected prevailing wages for that particular type of work. In the case of low-wage jobs, a premium would be added to the wage. This would still mean H–2A wages higher than virtually all non-H–2A farm worker wages. In other words, current H–2A workers would still have significant wage protection, and virtually all new H–2A workers would get a raise.

Third, the bill creates a one-time-only new Category called ''Adjusting'' Workers.

Experienced farm workers who are already in the U.S. would be allowed to stay if:

—They have worked at least 150 days in agriculture in the 12 months before the October 27 introduction of this bill;

—They agree to work at least 180 days a year, only in agriculture, for at least 5 of the next 7 years; during this 5–7 year adjustment period, they would be in a temproary, non-immigrant status;

—They return to their home country at least 2 months a year (during the 5–7 year adjustment period. Those with U.S.-born children—i.e., children who were already U.S. citizens—could stay year-round, but must agree to work in agriculture 240 days/year.

''Adjusting'' workers would be earning the right to keep their jobs or move to other agricultural jobs. Eventually, they could earn the right to a so-called ''green card''—in other words, permanent residency.

For one moment, I want to mention, and then dispose of, the ''A-Word'':

This bill is not about amnesty, for several reasons. I have always been opposed to amnesty for illegal immigrants. If this were an amnesty bill, I'd be against it.

This bill is about workers who are already here, for employers who need them and value their services, earning a right to stay.

Amnesty is a gift; this bill is about earning a right. Amnesty means one is home free; this bill is about stabilizing the agricultural work force and conditions residency on a 5–7 year agreement to continue in farm work.

The level of documentation required to prove a worker already has been working in the U.S. is much stricter than for any past amnesty law.

In closing, Mr. President, this is win-win legislation.

It will elevate and protect the rights, working conditions, and safety of workers. It will help workers—first domestic American workers, then other workers already here, then foreign guest workers—find the jobs they want and need.

It will assure growers of a stable, legal supply of workers, within a program that recognizes market realities. The adjusted-worker provisions also will give growers one-time assistance in adjusting to the new labor market realities of the 21st Century.

It will assure all Americans of a safe, consistent, affordable food supply.

The nation needs the Smith-Graham-Craig-Cleland AgJOBS bill. I invite the rest of my colleagues to join us as cosponsors; and I urge the Senate and the House to act promptly to enact this legislation into law.

THE HUNGER RELIEF ACT OF 1999

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, yesterday Senators SPECTER, LEAHY, JEFFORDS, and I introduced The Hunger Relief Act of 1999, S. 1805. Our goals in this legislation are to promote self-sufficiency and the transition from welfare to work, and to eradicate childhood hunger by increasing the availability of food stamps to low-income working families. Republicans and Democrats share these goals, and it deserves broad bipartisan support.

I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the bill and the statement of organizations supporting the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the materials were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 1805

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Hunger Relief Act of 1999''.

SEC. 2. RESTORATION OF FOOD STAMP BENEFITS FOR ALIENS.

(a) LIMITED ELIGIBILITY OF QUALIFIED ALIENS FOR CERTAIN FEDERAL PROGRAMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 402(a) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1612(a)) is amended—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''Federal programs'' and inserting ''Federal program'';

(ii) in subparagraph (D)—

(I) by striking clause (ii); and

(II) in clause (i)—

(aa) by striking ''(i) SSI.—'' and all that follows through ''paragraph (3)(A)'' and inserting the following:

''(i) IN GENERAL.—With respect to the specified Federal program described in paragraph (3)'';

(bb) by redesignating subclauses (II) through (IV) as clauses (ii) through (iv) and indenting appropriately;

(cc) by striking ''subclause (I)'' each place it appears and inserting ''clause (i)''; and

(dd) in clause (iv) (as redesignated by item (bb)), by striking ''this clause'' and inserting ''this subparagraph'';

(iii) in subparagraph (E), by striking ''paragraph (3)(A) (relating to the supplemental security income program)'' and inserting ''paragraph (3)'';

(iv) in subparagraph (F);

(I) by striking ''Federal programs'' and inserting ''Federal program'';

(II) in clause (ii)(I)—

(aa) by striking ''(I) in the case of the specified Federal program described in paragraph (3)(A),''; and

(bb) by striking ''; and'' and inserting a period; and

(III) by striking subclause (II);

(v) in subparagraph (G), by striking ''Federal programs'' and inserting ''Federal program'';

(vi) in subparagraph (H), by striking ''paragraph (3)(A) (relating to the supplemental security income program)'' and inserting ''paragraph (3)''; and

(vii) by striking subparagraphs (I), (J), and (K); and

(B) in paragraph (3)—

(i) by striking ''means any'' and all that follows through ''The supplemental'' and inserting ''means the supplemental''; and

(ii) by striking subparagraph (B).

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 402(b)(2)(F) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1612(b)(2)(F)) is amended by striking ''subsection (a)(3)(A)'' and inserting ''subsection (a)(3)''.

(b) FIVE-YEAR LIMITED ELIGIBILITY OF QUALIFIED ALIENS FOR FEDERAL MEANS-TESTED PUBLIC BENEFIT.—Section 403 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1613) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(2), by adding at the end the following:

''(L) Assistance or benefits under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.).''; and

(2) in subsection (d)—

(A) by striking ''not apply'' and all that follows through ''(1) an individual'' and inserting ''not apply to an individual''; and

(B) by striking ''; or'' and all that follows through ''402(a)(3)(B)''.

(c) AUTHORITY FOR STATES TO PROVIDE FOR ATTRIBUTION OF SPONSOR'S INCOME AND RESOURCES TO THE ALIEN WITH RESPECT TO STATE PROGRAMS.—Section 422(b) of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1632(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following: